

Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival
June 19, 2013
Sule Shangri-La Hotel – Myanmar Ballroom II
HRHDIFF Remarks
(as prepared)

- Ladies and gentlemen, diplomatic colleagues, friends. Alo-mingalaba-kha-mya.
- I'm honored to be here once again at this Human Rights Human Dignity Film Festival, and to be asked to say a few words in support.
- The U.S. Embassy, and specifically USAID, is proud to continue to be one of the sponsors of this event.
- Let me first say quickly how honored I am to be amidst so many heroes in this room – too many to list all. There is a long way to go in this country – a long way -- but the fact that you all are here, and that this film festival continues to be held year after year, is remarkable. And I will never take that for granted.
- Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi, Mon Mon Myat, everyone on your incredible team of festival organizers -- congratulations once again for the amazing job you do every year to put this festival together, to create this space to honor and promote the art of documentary film-making, and specifically film-making that focuses on human rights and human dignity.
- There are few people who don't love film. And we all know from experience film's power to tell a story, convey a message, and to imprint in our minds and hearts universal truths. Indeed, that includes the truth that regardless of whether we come from the United States or Shan State, San Francisco or Sittwe, Montreal or Myitkyina, or whether you are gay or straight, Buddhist or Muslim or any other religion, majority or minority, we are all – ALL -- united in our common humanity, and deserving of equal rights and equal dignity.
- But ensuring human rights and human dignity means we not only recognize our common humanity amidst our diversity, but live it in our daily lives as individuals and societies. It means treating others as you would want to be treated yourself, whoever they are, whatever their gender, whomever they love, and whomever they pray to.
- These films also celebrate human dignity and human rights simply by giving voice to the many who are voiceless, by bearing witness to the experiences and often injustices of others, pulling individuals and issues out of the shadows and demanding that we not simply look away.
- This is my third time taking part in this festival and this ceremony. I can't wait to see the films this evening, because I assure you they leave a lasting impression. I remember well films I saw last year and have used what I learned in my work as ambassador over the past year: Films like "This Land is Your Land," "Article 18," "Enter," "Blue Sky."

- For the past two years, the U.S. government has supported the Human Dignity Film Institute, training filmmakers from around Myanmar on human rights documentary film making.
- Through these workshops, I understand nine documentary films were produced this year, shedding light on issues of freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, child rights, rights of people with disability, freedom of expression, land confiscation, right to education, child soldiers, and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
- The U.S. embassy was honored to directly support the production of one film, “This Kind of Love” by U.S. filmmaker Jeanne Marie Hallacy, which follows Burmese human rights educator, activist, and my good friend Aung Myo Min as he returned home after 24 years in exile.
- So let me again express my thanks to the organizers for inviting me to watch more wonderful documentary films this evening, and to take part in this amazing festival.
- To all filmmakers, whether you win an award tonight or not, I am honored to be in your midst. And I remain inspired by your courage, your skill, and your commitment to human rights, human dignity, and equal justice for all in your country and around the world.
- Thank you.